

from our viewpoint...

Keep the web open

We note with relief that Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid decided Friday to postpone a vote on the Protect IP Act (PIPA) that had been scheduled for today. Its House counterpart, the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA), has also been put on hold.

While these two acts are aimed at criminals who do, in fact, take away money from content creators, would also undermine the freedom that is so much at the heart of the internet. PIPA would have allowed the U.S. to seek a court order to block access to domain name providers, financial companies and ad networks that it believes "has promoted acts that can infringe copyright." SOPA extends this to internet service providers, requiring them to block these "rogue sites" from being viewed by customers. This even applies to sites not in the United States.

Critics, including one Harvard law professor, say an entire website or domain containing thousands of pages could be blocked because of one infringing page. This has frightening free speech implications and could lead to high profile user-content sites like Wikipedia and YouTube being blacklisted.

Thankfully, our congressman and senators are opposing these bills. Sen. Jerry Moran said he was strongly opposed to both bills on grounds that they create internet security risks, have vague guidelines and could force law abiding companies into the courtroom. Sen. Pat Roberts sent a tweet on Wednesday, saying the bills "could destroy online entrepreneurship and innovation." Rep. Tim Huelskamp was asked about it by a caller in his telephone town hall Wednesday night. He said he opposed both bills.

The Goodland Star-News joins them in their opposition.

As few as three years ago, this legislation would have heavily affected the Star-News. The paper used to provide internet service (old-fashioned dialup) to as many as 1,000 customers all around northwest Kansas. The paper stopped offering the service in 2009, but had this law been enacted then, it would have been major trouble. The law would require that internet service providers block violating domains, something we were not capable of doing.

But that isn't the only reason we oppose them.

In February of last year, the U.S. government intended to block 10 websites that were posting child pornography. However, it "accidentally" blocked a free DNS provider that provided space 84,000 websites, none of which had pornography on them.

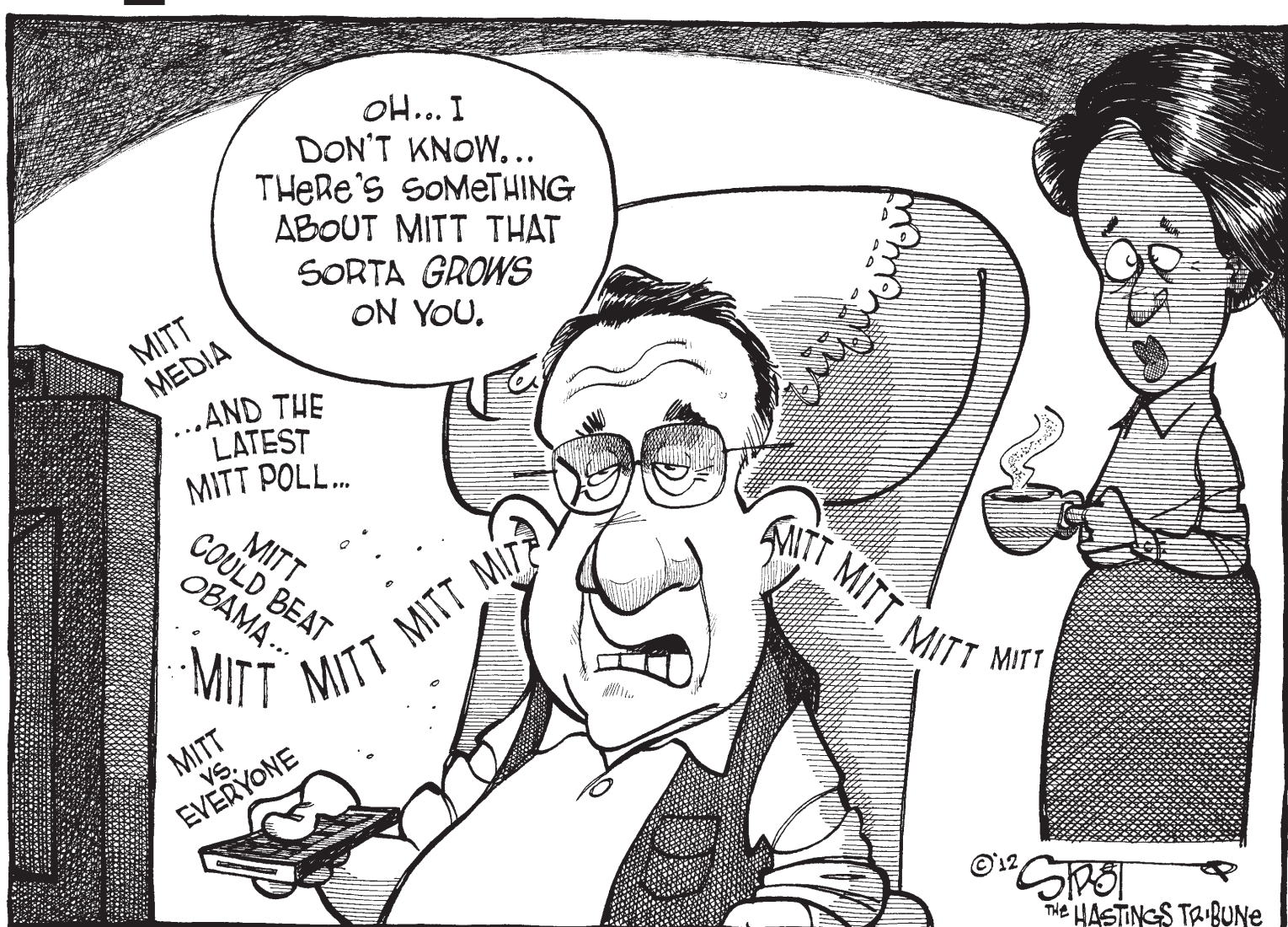
Users of these sites were greeted with a page saying the domain name had been seized by Homeland Security and a reminder that "advertisement, distribution, transportation, receipt and possession of child pornography constitute federal crimes that carry penalties for first time offenders of up to 30 years in federal prison, a \$250,000 fine, forfeiture and restitution."

Needless to say the DNS provider was upset, as were its hosted websites, who scrambled to get their sites reinstated and assure their customers and the public they did not, in fact, traffic in anything illegal. If it was a mistake, similar ones could be made in enforcing SOPA and PIPA, both of which would give government even more censoring power.

Online piracy is an issue, but there are ways to deal with it without taking down sites that allow user-generated content.

Sen. Moran's Online Protection and Enforcement of Digital Trade Act, or OPEN, is a step in the right direction. It allows the U.S. to target copyright infringers, but includes exceptions for sites that actively police for copyrighted material, which YouTube and similar sites do. It only targets sites that "primarily and willfully" engage in piracy. It does not go after domain name providers or search engines, and ensures there's due process for complaints.

In a free society any restrictions enacted must be carefully and narrowly targeted, and must protect freedom for the innocent, rather than curtail it to catch the guilty. —Kevin Bottrell



Bush correct about extremists in Congress

"It's actually pretty good," my uncle insisted. When he asked if I had already read my Christmas gift from him, a copy of George W. Bush's Decision Points, I joked that I had been waiting for it to come out in paperback.

My uncle and I frequently give each other books on or by political figures we hold in low esteem. They're sort of gag gifts, but I still usually read them. By listening to opposing points of view one can frequently learn something, and occasionally discover heretofore unknown areas of agreement. I had such an experience reading the 43rd President's book.

Bush's political memoir didn't redefine for me the major points of what I believe his legacy will be for historians. The Bush Presidency will be forever tainted by two disastrous policy decisions: huge tax cuts which ushered in crushing deficits, and the invasion of Iraq, an undertaking billed to a credit card which was not worth the cost. But in a chapter entitled "Leading," he talks of the need to reduce the ideological extremes in Congress and proposes that redistricting be carried out by committees of non-partisan elders.

Bush argues that since so many districts are gerrymandered to favor one party or the other few districts are competitive nationally in most years. The only true competition in "safe" districts is intraparty in nature. Therefore many members run to the far end of the political spectrum to fend off primary challenges.

President Obama's recent characterization



a voice of reason

alan jilka

of Congress as "dysfunctional," hit a chord with most of his countrymen, and the institution has an approval rating that hovers around eight percent nationally. So what about former President Bush's idea?

An effort to put such a system in place in Kansas failed during the 2009 session of the Kansas Legislature. Groups in power tend to prefer to use the redistricting process to increase that power. The tradition goes back to Massachusetts Governor Eldridge Gerry's use of the strategy in his state back in 1812.

Such an exercise will be on full display this year in the Kansas Legislature. And one of the main protagonists from ten years ago is back to lead the effort, House Speaker Mike O'Neil. O'Neil, who recently thought a photo of Michelle Obama on a windy day with a racial insult below was so funny that he forwarded it to the entire Republican caucus, led the effort last time that, among other things, split the city of Lawrence in an effort to push Kansas City Democrat Dennis Moore out of his seat.

By law redistricting is a state function. But since the four Kansas congressmen are all Republican, they are rumored to be working

on a map among themselves to present for the Legislature's approval. This sets up conflict between Congressman Tim Huelskamp, whose first district needs to gain residents, and Lynn Jenkins (second) and Kevin Yoder (third) who want the tradeoffs to make their congressional seats safer.

Redistricting at the state level will also amplify conflicts during a session in which Governor Sam Brownback has laid out an ambitious agenda. Brownback, schooled in the hyper-partisan environment of Washington, D.C., has brought its influence back to Kansas. Moderate Republican senators who have drawn the governor's ire already have primary opponents. And redistricting will purposely be left for later in the session so that the Administration and its allies can use its threats as coercion to bring legislators into line behind their agenda.

I think most Kansans, like most Americans, feel we need less partisanship in our political system, not more. If Governor Brownback really wants to make a positive contribution to our state he could propose and push former President Bush's idea of a non-partisan redistricting commission. The move would create publicity for our state, this time for the right reasons.

Alan Jilka is a former mayor of Salina. He was the Democratic nominee for the U.S. House of Representatives in 2010.

Moderation and balance

It's the new year and like so many, I have vowed to shed those extra pounds. Losing weight is no easy task. Expectations often exceed the will to lose the weight gradually during an extended period of time.

Today, there are as many diets out there as there are people who attempt to stick to them. What it really boils down to is watching what we eat, caloric intake and exercise. If we have the discipline to do that, each of us can meet our goals.

Still, when it comes to exercise and diet, myths are as plentiful as the calories in a piece of pecan pie—one of my favorites by the way. To clear up some of these misconceptions, I visited with a nutrition specialist during the holidays to set the record straight or at least point me in the right direction.

One common myth and core ingredient in several popular diets today involves eating extra protein to build strong muscles and rev up your metabolism. Today, most Americans, whether they are weekend warriors (athletes) or not, take in plenty of protein from a normal diet. Protein powders and amino acid supplements are unnecessary. That is unless you want to bulk up and look like the former governor of California whose most famous movie line was, "I'll be back."

The only healthy and safe way to increase the size and strength of muscles is to work out. Too much protein, if not burned as energy, turns to body fat.

Another myth would have us believe that sugary foods provide quick energy. While a candy bar, energy bar or soft drink before exercising may trigger an insulin response, that causes a rapid peak and then fall of blood



Insight this week

john schlageck

sugar.

The most efficient source of energy comes from complex carbohydrates. That includes whole-grain breads and cereals, pasta, fresh fruits and vegetables.

So what about the popular diets that suggest staying away from carbs altogether?

Not such a good idea. The real key to a healthy diet is moderation and balance. It also includes a diverse, complete grouping of foods.

As for the so-called energy drinks and I won't mention even one of those flooding the convenience and supermarket shelves, most of these are caffeine, speed or some other stimulant. And we all know that speed kills, maims or throws your body out of whack.

Vitamins and minerals do not contain energy. However, some vitamins help the body use energy.

Unless there is a deficiency, supplements will not help performance. Taking unneeded

supplement may do more harm than good. Too much vitamin A or D can lead to side effects such as liver damage.

Another myth suggests thirst is a good signal it's time to take fluid.

Wrong. Vigorous exercise can blunt the body's thirst mechanism. Drinking plenty of liquids, especially water, is important during exercise to prevent dehydration. For every pound of weight we lose through sweating, we need to drink two cups of water, whether we are thirsty or not.

The last myth, but one we cannot forget, suggests that milk causes "cottonmouth." Nervousness and fluid loss, not milk, make the mouth feel dry before a game, match or other competition.

Drinking milk, water or other fluids before exercising is essential. The body needs to maintain its fluid levels during a workout. Cold drinks, with the exception of those containing alcohol, are the ideal beverage during physical activity because they help cool our bodies.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau has been writing about farming and ranching in Kansas for more than 25 years. He is the managing editor of "Kansas Living," a quarterly magazine dedicated to agriculture and rural life in Kansas.

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